

2. POPULATION AND ECONOMICS

HISTORIC AND CURRENT POPULATION

Population totals and characteristics from the past and present help establish trends for the future population to be planned for. Since it is the people of the community that use land and services, the future population becomes a very important determinate in developing the plan.

After its founding in 1876 Roca experienced a rapid growth. It is reported that the village had a population of 225 persons in 1881. Since that time the village has had an erratic population decline to a low of 105 in 1950. During the last 26 years from 1950 to 1976 the village has shown a slight population growth to an estimated 1976 total of approximately 125 persons. (See population trends and projection graph.)

According to the 1970 census there were 118 people in the village, of which 59 were male and 59 were female. The age distribution was 37 (33%) between the ages of 0-19; 38 (33% between the ages of 20-44; 25 (19%) between 45 and 65; and 18 (15%) over 65. The following table compares the age characteristics as a percent of total population for Roca, Lancaster County less Lincoln, Lincoln and the State of Nebraska.

TABLE 2

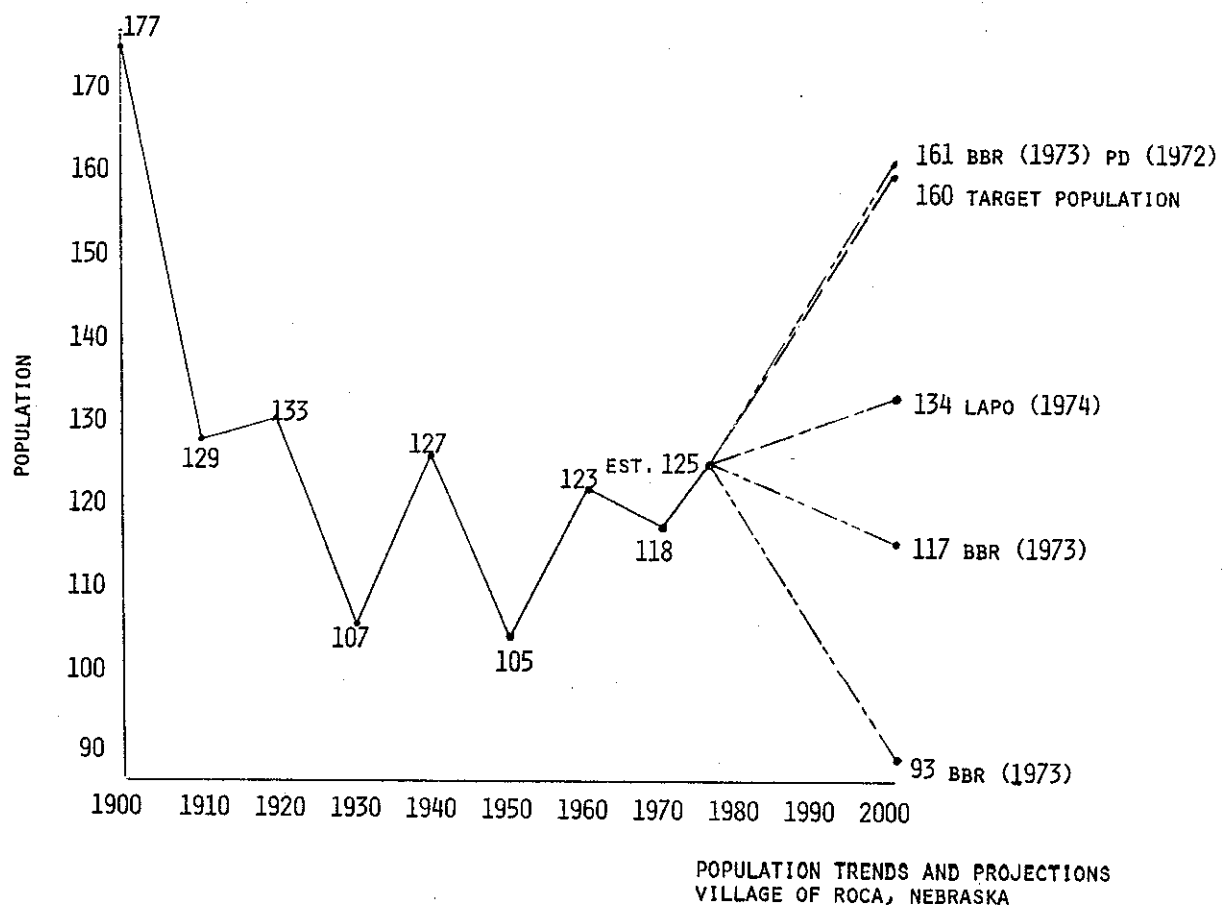
AGE CHARACTERISTICS FOR ROCA, LANCASTER COUNTY (LESS LINCOLN), LINCOLN AND NEBRASKA				
age group	Roca	Lancaster County	Lincoln	Nebraska
0-24	40.6%	47.7%	49.6%	45.7%
25-44	22.9	25.4	22.6	22.0
45-64	21.1	18.0	17.7	19.9
65&over	15.3	8.9	10.1	12.4

Source: 1970 Census of Population

The preceding figures show that the Village of Roca's age distribution is proportionately higher in the upper age brackets for the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County though fairly close to the State-wide distribution.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Several recent studies have made projections for the future population of Roca in the year 2000, as indicated on the chart "Population Trend and Projections". The Bureau of Business Research in 1973 indicated a high, medium and low population estimate for Roca which was 161, 117, and 93 respectively. A Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department study in 1972 projected a population of 161 and an updated Planning Department and Barton-Aschman projection, which was reviewed by LAPO, projects 134 persons.



These projections coupled with such other growth factors as a) the projected continued growth of Lancaster County as a whole, b) the local attitudes of the Village (the attitude survey indicated a desire for about 175 persons by the year 2000), c) the suitability and capability of the land to absorb additional growth, and d) the capability of the Village services to handle or be expanded to handle the population growth, indicate that a target population of 160 persons by the year 2000 would be reasonable to expect for planning purposes. It should be noted that this population figure is adjustable to some extent but if significant development should occur unexpectedly the population forecast and its land use demands will need to be revised.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Roca is strongly dependent, economically, on Lincoln for provision of employment and shopping service. Of those responding to the Attitude Survey only 12% were employed in Roca and 80% were employed in Lincoln.

Also recorded in the Attitude Survey is the fact that fully 71% of the respondents do most of their shopping in Lincoln and a further 26% do about half of their shopping in Lincoln.

From this it would appear that Roca is, to a large degree, a "bedroom community" of Lincoln.

However, although Lincoln will continue to be the economic focal for Roca the community should strive to provide for local economic development. The Attitude Survey indicated that 90% of the respondents favored attracting new business to Roca and the community goals echo this; and further state that the Village center be maintained and reinforced, and local employment opportunities be expanded.

In addition to providing desired commercial and employment services for Roca, expanded economic development should make important contributions to the local tax base.